



*Always  
Flying*

Sustaining the Fight

August 2014

1100<sup>th</sup> THEATER AVIATION SUSTAINMENT MAINTENANCE GROUP

TASK FORCE 16

# Colonel's Update

COL Brian Connelly



I write this first newsletter article from the shoreline of beautiful Camp Niantic, situated along the peaceful Niantic River, located in – not surprisingly – Niantic, Connecticut. The tranquility of the location is a mirage – even as I write this, the Soldiers and staff

of Task Force 16 are deep in the throes of both our Culminating Training Event (CTE) and Aviation Operational Readiness Exercise (AORE), which are occurring simultaneously here at the Camp, as well at the 1109th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group (TASMG) located 20 minutes to the east in New London. By the end of the week we'll have completed our mission-specific tasks, sent our Advance Party (ADVON) to our forward locations overseas, and prepared to return back to Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JB-MDL) for a final week of tactical training before flying the majority of the unit over to the sandbox.

Yes, I said “the majority” of the unit – not “the rest” -as we’re not even all here yet! While most of the unit is comprised from Maryland’s 1100th TASMG, we now make up a Task Force with Soldiers from a dozen different states - Virginia, Connecticut, Arkansas, California, Arizona, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Wisconsin, Georgia, and even Hawaii (how you talk someone who lives in Hawaii to deploy to the Middle East for several months is beyond me). We’re Task Force 16, which means we’re the 16th Task Force deployed under the auspices of the Army Aviation and Missile Command (AMCOM) to conduct depot-level maintenance (and other duties as required). This time around, one of our major “other duties” is retrograde, which is collecting all the loose aviation-related parts and equipment that have accumulated all over the Area of Operations (AO) since 2001. Believe me – it’s a lot of stuff! And because of this high-priority, high-visibility mission of retrieving all this stuff, we’re deploying as “Task Force Retriever.” I know – those of you who have been around TASMG’s for awhile know that traditionally they’ve used the Tasmanian Devil for a mascot. But after 15 rotations, we’re ready for something new. Retrievers are smart, friendly, loyal, quick-learning, and hard-working - and if that doesn’t describe this Task Force, then I don’t know what does!

I’m extremely lucky to be in command of this Task Force. This will personally be my fourth deployment overseas since 2001, so I’m no stranger to what it’s like and what’s expected. This group is by far the best trained, best prepared unit I’ve seen deploy in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, or New Dawn. How confident am I in my team? Well, the Commander just spent this last hour typing on his computer by the river while the rest of his unit is being scrutinized under the ongoing simultaneous CTE and AORE before deployment. We’ve got this.



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## Command Sergeant Major

CSM Nilsa Cruz

Greetings to our families and friends from the Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JB-MDL) mobilization station. First, I want to welcome the Soldiers that are joining our Task Force from a handful of different states. These Soldiers bring years of experience and knowledge to our team. They are a great asset to our mission and I am looking forward to working with them.

Second, I want to thank 2LT Meister and SSG Robles for putting this newsletter together on such short notice. The intent of the newsletter is to share our deployment progress, Soldiers' stories and to provide resourceful information to our families and friends.

Since our arrival at JB-MDL, we have received realistic training that will help us have a successful deployment. On July 6th the main body moved to Camp Niantic, Connecticut to perform aviation maintenance, staff exercises, and validation processes. The Aviation Maintenance and Retrograde Teams are highly motivated after receiving their military occupational specialties (MOS) training that is required for the mission. In addition, the Retrograde Team is getting the opportunity to learn new skills. I want to express my sincere thanks to the 1109<sup>th</sup> Theater Aviation Sustainment Group (TASMG) and the Connecticut National Guard for providing us this great opportunity to have hands-on training at their facilities.

The next and final phase before departing from JB-MDL to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, will be the Collective Task Operations Lane training (CTOL). This training will provide a crawl-walk-run experience of typical situations that our Task Force may encounter in Theater.

Last but not least, an enormous thanks goes out to our Family Readiness Group, Ms. Hash and Ms. Anderson, for coordinating a great and delicious cookout for the Soldiers and for providing us with Soldier care packages. Thank You!!!!



CSM Nilsa M. Cruz  
Semper Volans!

## Chaplain's Corner

CH (MAJ) Lonny Wortham

Resiliency is a term that the military throws around quite a bit. As a chaplain I am concerned that its meaning could be lost because people are being saturated with the term. Oftentimes overexposure can cause desensitization to the point where something loses its meaning in its entirety because it has been used too often. It's like eating a piece of cake. That first piece tastes really good. The second slice is okay, but if you eat three or four you may actually start to feel sick and disgusted. Over the course of our deployment I will provide you with small actionable thoughts which can be easily implemented into your life.



The first step to becoming spiritually resilient is to learn how to P.U.S.H. You may ask, what is P.U.S.H.? This is what you must learn to do when you are faced with adversity and difficulty. This is what we do when we are confronted with an obstacle which seems larger than life. We P.U.S.H. We pray until something happens. Praying is simple.

1. We take the time to apologize and repent for the things that we've done wrong, not only repent to God but to one another.
2. We take time to mediate on God's plans and purposes for our lives. We ask God, "What is your will for my life?"
3. Finally, we take time to give thanks and show gratitude to God for all His mercy all of His grace and all of His many blessings.

When things get difficult, when you feel emotionally overwhelmed, when you find yourself feeling frustrated, disappointed, sad, lonely, angry or tired:

**P.U.S.H.!! Pray Until Something Happens.**





## Company Commander

CPT Marshall Stevens

It has been a successful month for the Soldiers of the 1100th TASMG. We have welcomed 18 new Soldiers from more than ten different states. Quickly, they were embraced and integrated into the unit and our mission. While the Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst mobilization site is a place no Soldier desires, I am pleased with the demeanor and performance of the Group. There is no doubt we are a unique unit with a unique mission. So unique, at times it appeared First Army (A unit whose mission is to advise, assist, and train reserve component formations to achieve Department of the Army directed readiness requirements during both pre- and post-mobilization) was not ready for us at all.

Soldiers, I challenge you to continue to stay mission focused and avoid distracters. There will be challenges ahead. Handle them with professionalism and look out for each other. To the Families, I challenge you to persevere on this deployment for this is not only a deployment for your Soldier, but for the Family. Our Soldiers will have the resources to enjoy Starbucks coffee and Tuesday Night Bingo, but remember that deployments are difficult regardless of location and amenities. Provide your Soldier love and support.

## First Sergeant

1SG David White

I would like to thank all of the family members, loved ones, and friends who came to wish us a farewell from Edgewood. Many thanks to Mrs. Allyson Hash and all of the Family Readiness Group (FRG) members and volunteers for the support that they continue to give us. We truly could not do our jobs abroad without all of your love and support.

It has been a very productive month for our Soldiers. We have been training on multiple tasks, from Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills to aviation maintenance and logistics. We have traveled from Maryland to New Jersey, New Jersey to Connecticut, and back to New Jersey in just a few short weeks. Please take comfort in knowing that your Soldier is trained and fully prepared for this deployment. The Soldiers continue to make me proud with their professionalism, performance, and confidence. You should be very proud of your Soldier as well. They continue to serve our country well. Soon we will be overseas for the next step of our deployment. Again, I thank all of you for your love and support of our Soldiers. God Bless You!



Soldiers were afforded the opportunity to ride along during training maneuvers



# Train As We Fight



Top: 1100<sup>th</sup> attends a safety briefing before loading the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter



Left: Soldiers have a little fun while waiting for their turn to test their protective masks

Bottom: SFC Harris makes his way to the qualification range



Top: 1100<sup>th</sup> begins the deployment process with a series of briefings at the Joint Readiness Center

Right: SPC Reed receives a set of magazines for Individual Weapons Qualification







SGT Enosin hangs out for a moment



SSG Burkins and SFC Gunter are hard at work



SGT Kaufman takes a look

## Maintenance Platoon

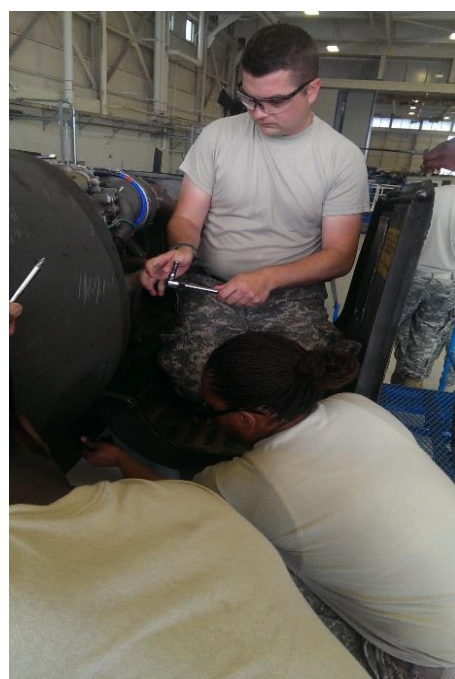
By 2LT Ashley Meister

The 1100<sup>th</sup> TASMGM Maintenance Platoon Soldiers traveled to Groton, CT from Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst to receive two weeks of MOS training by the 1109<sup>th</sup> TASMGM. The Soldiers of Maintenance Platoon possess a variety of 15 series MOS's including those who are aircraft mechanics, technical inspectors, ultrasound and eddy current testers, and those who work sheet metal repairs. During their stay in CT, the Maintenance Platoon worked in the Aviation Classification and Repair Depot (AVCRAD) of the 1109<sup>th</sup>. Soldiers from the 1109<sup>th</sup> support deploying forces with aviation maintenance support, provide backup support to other deployed AVCRADs, and provide workload expansion capabilities. The Soldiers of the Maintenance Platoon working in the 1109<sup>th</sup> AVCRAD are being exposed to a different level of aviation maintenance compared to the maintenance they have been performing in Maryland. When overseas, the additional skills that the Soldiers are learning in the AVCRAD will help them become more resourceful and add to their MOS tool kit. This will help overcome the problem of less available personnel when the mechanics arrive overseas.

CW3 James (Bryan) Plummer, the Platoon Leader for the Maintenance Platoon has enjoyed watching his Soldiers become exposed to different aspects of their job. CW3 Plummer is a 151A, aviation maintenance technician. The Chief has set goals for his Soldiers while at the CT AVCRAD which are simply, "Keeping [my Soldiers] fully employed by receiving quality training to make them more well rounded and to expose them to things they have never seen or done before."

SFC Luis Moreno, an NCO in the maintenance platoon, has been impressed with the 1109<sup>th</sup> AVCRAD facility. SFC Moreno comes from the Army Aviation Support Facility (AASF) in Arizona where he is a full time technical inspector (TI). He is grateful of the support that the CT TASMGM has given his platoon and can tell that his Soldiers are learning a lot. SFC Moreno finished by saying, "The maintenance platoon is not dragging their feet, they are positive and are engaged in their job here."

The Maintenance Platoon spent a total of 14 days in CT before they traveled back to Joint Base McGuire- Dix-Lakehurst, where they will continue their mobilization training before deploying to Kuwait. CW3 Plummer is eager to get into theater, as are his troops. "Morale is high, my Soldiers are excited to get to a new country, and get into a rhythm. The young guys are also excited to start contributing to the mission and receive the satisfaction that comes with that."



SGT Holter and the crew get the job done





## Safety Officer

CW5 Sam Thomas

You already know our unit completed the Army Readiness Assessment Program (ARAP) in April of this year; many of us completed it during annual training at Ft. Indian Town Gap. But, did you know the 1100<sup>th</sup> TSMG scored well above the Army average on all questions in all eight categories? This means our unit is currently unlikely to have a serious accident. That's good news! Due to our favorable ranking above the Army average we qualify for a safety streamer for our unit guide-on. We are in the process of getting that streamer and hope to have it soon!

The first of two mandatory safety stand-down events were completed on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July at the JB MDL Demobilization Auditorium. The stand-down was quite interactive and I thank all of you for your participation. Whether you posed questions or comments to the instructors, participated in the Foreign Object Damage (FOD) Skit or the Mental and Spiritual Safety skit, or served as an instructor or other subject matter expert, my hat goes off to you. This level of involvement is truly what makes a great and meaningful event.

Topics and primary instructors follow (asterisked items are required by 1<sup>st</sup> TCS Kuwait):

- a. Opening comments by TF16 Commander – COL Connelly
- b. Safety Officer (SO)/ADSO Responsibilities – CW5 Thomas
- c. Preliminary Loss Reports (BG Crutchfield's: Five Deadly Words) – CW5 Thomas
- d. Command Support Programs:
  - (1) Hearing Conservation – 2LT Jack
  - (2) Fire Prevention – SFC Mark Zang (PPT Slides by MAJ Magness)
  - (3) Environmental/Hazwaste – CW5 Thomas
  - (4) Driver's Training – SFC Keene
  - (5) Personal protective Equipment – SSG Burkins
  - (6) HAZCOM (MSDS) - CPT Morris
  - (7) FOD Prevention – CW2 Luke Anderson, SSG David Reuben
- e. \*Hot Weather Injury Prevention – CW5 Thomas
- f. Working/Living Conditions Safety – CW5 Thomas
- g. \*Vehicle Safety - Driving in Kuwait – COL Connelly/CW5 Thomas
- h. \*Sports Injury Prevention – SSG Casterline
- i. \*Weapons Clearing Procedures – SGT Cimino
- j. \*Composite Risk Management (The Basics) – CW5 Thomas
- k. Operational Hazard Report (OHR) Program – CW5 Thomas
- l. Mental and Spiritual Safety – MAJ Wortham (TF16 Chaplain)

*Continued on next page*





## *Safety... continued*

Special thanks to our thespians, stage writers and stage crew of the 1100<sup>th</sup> Theater Group for their original untitled production of the evils of FOD. The theater troupe: CW2 Anderson, SGT Holter, SSG Reuben, SSG Newman, SSG Conger, SSG Westervelt, SSG Casterline, SSG DeLong, SGT Cox, SPC Hobbs, SPC McGee, SPC Allen, and SPC Brauning. Please join me in encouraging this troupe of fine actors to return for a command performance at our next safety stand down!

Also, a special thanks goes to CH Wortham and his troupe of method actors for their inspirational Mental and Spiritual Safety skit. The cast: SSG Tolliver, SSG Casterline, SSG McClean, SGT Jackson, SGT Smith, SGT Harrod, SPC Moore, SPC Stevenson, SPC McCallister, SPC McGee, SPC Adams, PFC Conley, PFC Eskridge and SGT Enosin as videographer/recorder. The skit received rave reviews and we hope to see more of the same at the next safety stand-down!

Reminder: As we move into our new working environment please be on the lookout for physical conditions or operational procedures that can hurt us. Operational Hazard Report (OHR) and Employees Report of Alleged Unsafe or Unhealthful Working Condition forms are available from immediate supervisors. Fill out the form and pass it on through your chain of command to me. *When in doubt – fill it out!* I will coordinate efforts through the S4 and the Command Safety Council to get things fixed. Fill out either form, whether right or wrong, and let me sort it out. We can't fix what we don't know about. There is no restriction for completing OHRs. They are not punitive; therefore no one gets in trouble as a result of submitting this form...use it liberally!

As Safety Officer for the 1100<sup>th</sup> TASM, I am here to serve you. Approach me at any time with your safety concerns. You can best assist me by sending your concerns via email, or writing information on a piece of paper to hand me when discussing your concern. Please be as detailed as possible and include your contact information so I can back-brief you on corrections made. SSG DeLong is the Additional Duty Safety Officer; he too can assist you.

Thank you, and let's have a safe and rewarding deployment!

CW5 Sam Thomas  
Aviation/Ground Safety Officer, 1100<sup>th</sup> TASM  
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**AVOID THE WORST, PUT SAFETY FIRST**





# Promotions and Awards

## Promotions

- MayB Sersland – Lieutenant Colonel
- Lelia McClean – Staff Sergeant
- Vincent McCallister - Specialist

## Awards

- LTC MayB Sersland – Meritorious Service Medal
- SSG Lelia McLean – Army Commendation Medal



LTC Sersland and family after the promotion ceremony



SSG McLean receives an ARCOM for duties performed as the Medical Readiness NCO as BFSB



COL Connelly makes a few remarks at LTC Sersland's promotion



Above: SFC White was promoted to First Sergeant in June



Left: Vincent McCallister addresses the company after being promoted to Specialist



# Soldier Spotlight: SFC Mark Tripp

Interview by SSG Robles

The spotlight is on SFC Mark Tripp, from Hartford, Connecticut.

SSG Robles: What's your MOS?

*SFC Tripp: I'm a 15U, a Chinook mechanic.*

SSG Robles: What's the best part of being a 15U?

*SFC Tripp: Everything. Because we're flight engineers, we get to fly. It makes me feel like I'm part of the crew.*

SSG Robles: How do you feel about deploying to Kuwait?

*SFC Tripp: I feel fine. This is my fourth tour, but it'll be a different experience working with the TASMG.*

SSG Robles: Even though this is your fourth tour, was it difficult to leave your family?

*SFC Tripp: I never like to leave my family, but I know they're supporting me.*

SSG Robles: Is there any particular comfort food you'll miss while deployed?

*SFC Tripp: Oh yes, I'll miss lasagna and my wife's pierogis.*

SSG Robles: What are you looking forward to the most while on this deployment?

*SFC Tripp: Working out. I plan to get cross-fit certified.*

SSG Robles: What other goals do you have for yourself in Kuwait?

*SFC Tripp: Just being a better-rounded Soldier, honestly. I want to continue my military education. I plan on completing SSD 4.*

SSG Robles: If you could receive anything in a care package, what would it be?

*SFC Tripp: A six pack of Yuengling! No, I'm kidding, I know that's not authorized so don't send that. Seriously, I'd like to receive some protein shakes for my workouts.*

SSG Robles: Do you and your family have any vacation plans when you get back?

*SFC Tripp: My family and I are going to Disney World when I get home. My son will be five years old and he'll love it. We have a timeshare down there and we're really excited.*





# Morale, Welfare, and Recreation

## Fourth of July

1100<sup>th</sup> TASMG held a picnic at Doughboy Field, Joint Base Mcguire-Dix-Lakehurst on Fourth of July. The unit was granted an exception to policy and authorized to wear civilian clothes for the event. Chaplain Wortham, SFC Tripp, and 2LT Meister fired up the grill so the Soldiers could fill up on burgers, hot dogs, sausages and chicken. Soldiers participated in outdoor activities such as softball, miniature golf and flag football before settling down to watch the phenomenal fireworks display after sundown.



## BBQ at Camp Niantic

Soldiers of the TASMG enjoyed a small cookout put on by Allyson Hash of the FRG 29th CAB during their two week stay at Camp Niantic, CT. The Soldiers indulged in hotdogs, hamburgers, potato salad, and pies during the warm and sunny Saturday afternoon. Troops also enjoyed canoeing and kayaking on the beautiful Niantic River throughout the day.

Thanks Allyson for another job well done!



## Have a story for the newsletter?

Contact:

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